DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 183 012 FL 010 971

AUTHOR Lacey, Douglas N.
TITLE Individualized Instruction in Latin at the Ohio State University.
PUB DATE Jun 79
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the conference of the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (Columbus, OH, June 1979).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Language Programs; Higher Education; *Independent Study; *Language Instruction; *Latin; Needs Assessment; Program Administration; *Program Development; *Program Evaluation

ABSTRACT

The establishment of an individualized language program is seen as embracing four major considerations. A needs assessment will deal with the problem areas of negative attitudes and high attrition rates, inadequate operating budgets, and the tendency toward diminished effectiveness of foreign language instruction in general. Options for program development are to be considered, including: (1) relationships between the individualized program and co-existing classroom programs, (2) flexibility for the student to transfer from one mode of instruction to another, (3) choice of specific skills and levels to be covered by the individualized program, (4) establishment of policy regarding variable pacing and variable credit, and (5) the setting of minimum achievement goals in a program of competency-based instruction. Program implementation involves material selection and the establishment of schedules and administrative procedures. Finally, program assessment by means of formative and summative evaluations should determine the fate of the program after prescribing recommendations to improve program effectiveness. The Individualized Latin program at the Ohio State University offers a case history. The steps in developing, implementing, and evaluating this program are outlined. Modifications of the program that resulted from the evaluation are described. These changes were extensive enough to require a year's suspension of the program. (JB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED183012

Individualized Instruction in Latin at the Ohio State University

Douglas N. Lacey

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Douglas N. Lacey

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

FL010971

For three and one half years, the Department of Classics at The Ohio State University has experimented with individualized instruction in Latin in conjunction with a multi-language grant supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. As a result of the experiment, the department is able to formulate, in a general manner, the considerations, options, and procedures that are associated with the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of individualized instruction in a foreign language.

The first portion of this discussion is devoted to a general outline of these matters, while the second portion will focus attention on the actual case history of the Individualized Latin program at Ohio State. This case history is by no means meant to serve as a model of what necessarily should happen, but rather as an example of what might take place during such an experiment.

Implicit in the consideration of establishing an individualized language program is the need for an alternative method of foreign language instruction. A formal needs assessment should serve as the basis for such a consideration and should result in the formulation of specific goals to meet the demands of problem-related areas. These areas might most easily be divided into three categories:

1. Negative attitudes and a high rate of attrition: traditional classrooms might be subject to a low level of student appeal and a high rate of attrition. A needs assessment of this particular problem might result in such goals as increased flexibility for students who study the language and new learning

approaches to bridge the gap between the uninterested, perhaps non-traditional student and the study of a foreign language, previously avoided because of complex schedules or negative attitudes.

2. Increasingly inadequate operating budgets: a needs assessment might determine that educational pressures to limit classroom size are far out-distanced by budgetary pressures to become more cost-effective. Remedial goals to address this problem might focus on increased instructional capacity within a cost framework that is certainly no less efficient than present circumstances.
3. Educational values: a needs assessment might determine that the instructional effectiveness of the foreign language classroom is waning for an ever-increasing percentage of foreign language students. Remedial goals might mandate a system in which certain minimal levels of performance can be put within the reach of a larger number of students.

Once a needs assessment has been made and the goals of this assessment seem to prescribe some form of individualized instruction, the next consideration is the design of an individualized program that will best answer the stated goals. Several options must be considered:

1. Exclusivity: will the individualized program replace the classroom mode altogether, or will it operate side-by-side with classroom instruction? A decision of this nature might often be based on the size of the department and the amount of support available.

2. Flexibility: will students be confined to a single program, or will they have the option of changing from one mode to the other in mid-stream? If transfer is possible, will it be routinely prescribed for nearly all students, or will it be prescribed only as a remedy for students who are not faring well in one or the other of the two modes?
3. Extent: will the individualized option be made available at (a) the skill-building levels, (b) the intermediate reading levels, and/or (c) the advanced levels of foreign language study? The scope of the program largely depends on the needs and goals determined earlier.
4. Variable Pacing: variable pacing within a given quarter or semester is at the heart of individualized instruction and is not, therefore, really an option. There are, nevertheless, various forms of variable pacing that might be considered, from (a) a highly structured pace in which certain time schedules are fixed to a variable pace, to (b) a completely unstructured environment in which the only requirement is that each student complete X number of hours within the time framework of a given quarter or semester.
5. Variable Credit: the element of variable pacing may be supplemented by a system of variable credit, in which a student need not complete a fixed number of hours of language study by the end of a given time period, but may proceed at a faster or slower pace overall than the classroom. Matters to be determined when considering a variable credit program include

the extent of this option and the administration of this option. In extent, variable credit may range from a system which includes fixed minimums and fixed maximums in which the student may operate, to a system in which a complete range of hours (say, 1 - 15) is open to the student within a given period of time. Administratively it should be decided when and how credit hours can be changed. Options include (a) a system in which credit is not determined until the end of the quarter or semester; (b) a system in which a change of credit is permitted at some point during the quarter or semester; or (c) a system which allows variable credit sign-up only at the beginning of the quarter or semester.

6. Competency-Based Instruction: a set of goals for individualized instruction might include minimal levels of achievement on the part of individualized students in order to ensure the educational integrity of a program that allows for increased flexibility. There are a variety of options to consider regarding competency-based instruction; they may include unlimited allowances for the retaking of exams, or may put certain restrictions on the process of re-examination. It may also be instituted as an option for students to choose or ignore as they please.

Once the options available to an individualized language program have been tailored to fit the goals established by the needs assessment, the task of implementation lies ahead. Implementation can be broken down into two categories: materials and administration.

1. The selection of materials includes three options: (a) the adaptation of existing classroom texts to suit the individualized program; (b) the use of existing materials already adapted for use in individualized instruction; or (c) the creation of altogether new materials for use either in both the classroom and the individualized programs or exclusively in the individualized program. Decisions made regarding the flexibility of the entire program will necessarily affect the selection of one of these alternatives.
2. Administrative procedures include the solution of the following problems: (a) the location and adaptation of space necessary for an individualized program; (b) the establishment of staffing procedures, including the number of hours available to students and the minimum student-teacher ratio necessary for the program; (c) establishing schedules and record-keeping processes, and deciding upon the sorts of information and data that will be required for an effective evaluation of the program; (d) going through university or college channels to gain approval for whatever options might be at variance with current procedures; and (e) establishing a time framework for the piloting of the program and for the evaluation process.

Once the implementational phase has begun, one needs next to look at the evaluation process itself. Although the time schedule for evaluation should be established prior to implementation, the actual evaluation process should begin only when sufficient data can be made available for review. Evaluation might fall into two phases: formative and summative.

The formative evaluation is based on two specific aspects regarding the implementation of the individualized program: the fidelity of that implementation and the success in meeting the stated goals of the program.

1. An assessment of the fidelity of the program, that is, its conformity to the original procedures and options as they were outlined in the developmental phase of the project, is relatively easy to formulate. A routine comparison of the existing program to the stated procedures before implementation should enable one to come to a quick conclusion about the fidelity of the pilot operation.

2. An assessment of the effectiveness of the program depends on the stated goals of the project. This aspect of the formative evaluation might include the following data: (a) student evaluations to measure changes in student attitudes and changes in the make-up of the student body; (b) enrollment figures to measure the initial appeal of the program and the rate of attrition; (c) staff evaluations to measure the attitudes of the instructional staff toward the educational effectiveness and viability of the program; (d) flow charts to measure the flexibility of the program, the average rate of progress, and the characteristics of student usage; (e) a budgetary analysis to measure the relative cost-effectiveness of the program; (f) an administrative report to address the viability of current administrative procedures and the adequacy of space and facilities for the program; and (g) standardized comparative testing results to measure the efforts of individualized students against those of their classroom peers.

The formative evaluation, as its name implies, is prescriptive rather than decisive. Its net result should be a series of analyses and prescriptive recommendations to improve the program and perhaps to readdress the stated goals. If extensive recommendations for change are made, a second formative evaluation may be necessary at a later date before a summative evaluation can take place.

The summative evaluation should take place at an appointed time during a period of relatively full implementation. This evaluation is essentially a "yes" or "no" decision regarding the continued support for the individualized option. It need not include a statement on the fidelity of the program, but will probably be based on criteria quite similar to those of the formative evaluation. A negative evaluation might result in the decision to phase out the program, while a positive decision would be the final go-ahead for the individualized option. This evaluation may or may not include prescriptions for the future.

The Individualized Latin program at Ohio State presents a case history of the design, implementation, and evaluation of an individualized language project. The following is an outline of the history of this particular project:

1. Based on recommendations during an intensive review of the foreign language requirement at Ohio State during 1971, an informal needs assessment focused on the following problems in Latin instruction: (a) high rates of attrition; (b) low student appeal; (c) growing demands on student schedules; (d) unsatisfactory results in the classroom instruction; and (e) a declining enrollment base of students from the traditional pool. The goals that the individualized instruction project

was made to address, therefore, included (a) lower attrition; (b) better student attitudes toward the learning of Latin; (c) more scheduling flexibility; (d) improved student performance; and (e) new sources of enrollment.

2. Of all the options available to individualized instruction, the following were adopted for implementation: (a) individualized and classroom modes of instruction would exist side-by-side; (b) complete flexibility would be available to students who wished to transfer from one program to the other; (c) the individualized option would be restricted to the so-called skill-building levels of Latin instruction and would not continue through the intermediate and advanced phases of the language study; (d) variable pacing would be completely unrestricted; that is, no deadlines or minimal pacing requirements would be put into effect; (e) variable credit, unrestricted from one to fifteen hours per quarter, was selected as part of the individualized program with the understanding that students would be able to alter the number of credit hours in the 7th week of each quarter; and (f) competency-based learning with a minimum standard of 80% for a passing grade and unlimited retakes was set up to be an integral part of the program.

3. Implementation procedures involved the selection and creation of suitable materials and the design of the administrative procedures. Regarding materials, it was decided that the classroom materials would be adapted to accommodate individualized instruction. With the cooperation of many facets of the university, the following administrative procedures and matters

were worked out: (a) the College of Humanities allocated the space in 286 University Hall for the Individualized Latin program; (b) a staff of one director, one graduate research associate, two undergraduate aides, and a flexible number of graduate teaching associates was set up; (c) routine testing and recording forms were drawn up; (d) approval from the University Committee on Academic Affairs was granted for the variable credit procedures, and the pattern for this aspect of the program was developed; (e) Academic Affairs also granted approval of the competency-based instruction with a minimum of 80% set up as the lowest passing mark; and (f) a time schedule was developed to include a period of combined formative and summative evaluations by the Department of Classics after the second full year of operation, to be followed by a project evaluation by the National Endowment a full year and a half later.

4. The evaluation process, which took place within the department during the spring of 1978, was basically formative although it did include a summative recommendation by the department to continue the program as an integral part of the Classics Department. The following is a summary of the results of that evaluation: a. It was unanimously agreed that complete fidelity had been maintained throughout the initial stages of implementation. b. The effectiveness of the program was judged on the basis of several reports: (1) student evaluations indicated that there h[illegible] been a positive change in the attitudes of the students taking Individualized Latin, but that there had been no visible change in the make-up of the student body; (2) statistics

revealed dramatic increases in enrollment in elementary Latin although the program was drawing students from the same basic pool as it had before and the rate of attrition was approximately the same; (3) staff reactions were mixed, citing flaws in the materials and weaknesses in the testing and grading system as primary flaws; (4) student usage of the center was analyzed and found to be extremely erratic, and their rate of progress through the program was found to be, on the average, extremely slow; (5) an informal comparison with classroom costs showed the individualized program to be more cost effective than the classroom; (6) an administrative report indicated no major administrative problems in the system; and (7) the results of comparative testing in the 104 classes revealed that individualized instruction had apparently contributed to grade inflation and, at the same time, poorer educational preparation.

On the basis of the reports, the department, while approving the continuation of this option, made the following prescriptions:

1. New materials be created that would accommodate both the classroom and the individualized sections better. These materials would then be under the complete control of the department regarding both content and the possibility of future revisions.
2. Competency-based learning was to be modified in the following manner: a student receiving less than 90% on a test or quiz would have the option of trying that exam up to two more times. This system would open the grading up to include the full range from A through E, but would still allow a motivated student to

take advantage of the chance to prove that he or she has learned more and to receive credit for it.

3. While no restrictions were placed on the variable credit option, a single deadline for the completion of one credit hour early in the quarter was recommended, as well as the addition of formal conference periods during the quarter to increase the amount of direct contact between the staff and the students.
4. More extensive hours of operation were recommended, so that nights and weekends might be included.
5. The individualized option would continue to be fully integrated with the classroom mode, with a classroom section of Latin 104 mandatory for all students. To emphasize the integrity of the entire program, the center was modified to include space for all elementary and intermediate Latin classes as well as the regular individualized activities.
6. In order to implement these recommendations fully, the department decided that a full year be given to (a) phase out the students under the old systems, (b) allow time for the creation of the new materials and procedures, and (c) prepare the center for the admission of new students in a controlled pilot group in the summer of 1979. An extensive commitment of faculty time and involvement was pledged, so that a better Individualized Latin program would result.

At the present time, the Latin program is preparing for its first new students in almost a year, with a small number of continuing students left to finish their programs this summer. In the evaluation process by

the department, since it was in some ways a summative evaluation, no future departmental evaluation procedure was outlined; nevertheless, it is clear that the evaluation processes required by the National Endowment and the continued interest on the part of the entire Department of Classics will make continuous evaluation an integral part of this program. In the end, however, cost-effectiveness will be the determining factor if individualized instruction is to survive in its present form at Ohio State. Thus far, it has appeared to be cost effective; but it has been receiving money from a grant for staff and time that will soon disappear. The College of Humanities will, in the end, be faced with the one truly summative evaluation of all when it analyzes the costs of individualized language instruction and compares those figures to the costs of the regular classroom.